

**"A Sleep"**

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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**April 2016**

**Expected Date of Graduation  
May 2016**

SpColl  
Undergrad  
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2489  
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### Abstract

The world of dreams and the world of horror are close bedfellows, in their penchant for disrupting and challenging our rational sense of reality. As a lifelong sufferer of night terrors, I have always been interested in the intersection of dreams and fear. Additionally, storytelling is perhaps my largest passion and it is the basis of my professional field. In this project I combined these interests. I have written, illustrated, animated, and created the soundtrack for a short horror film which relates, without dialogue, the experience of having a night terror. My author's statement supplements this by exploring not only the technical process of the project, but my thoughts on the subjects of dreams, horror, and storytelling.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor Chris Flook, not only for his guidance on this project but for his guidance in my development of the technical skills at work in this piece. Without him and his motion graphics class, I never would have found this passion for animation.

I would like to thank my parents for, of course, raising me, but also for being the shoulders upon which I could always lean throughout my college career, in times of severe stress and depression. Their understanding and encouragement has been crucial to my perseverance.

I would also like to thank my brother Curt, for being the first person to provide me with the program Adobe Photoshop, which turned me toward the path of digital artistry I have followed ever since.

## **"A Sleep"**

### **Reflections on Dreams, Storytelling, and Horror**

"A Sleep" is an animated short film, telling without words the tale of a young child's nightmare.

A number of factors drove me to choose this particular project for my thesis. I knew from the start that I wanted to tell a story. Storytelling is one of the most important elements of my creative spirit. When it came to the matter of what kind of story to tell, that wasn't hard to decide. The horror genre is near and dear to my heart, as is the realm of surrealism. I have suffered from sleep paralysis and night terrors for my whole life, so I wanted to bring that experience to screen where I could explore it artistically.

I also wanted to tell this story in a novel way which would push forward my technical and artistic skills. Since I've been very interested in illustration and design since childhood, and my career plan involves working in both design and animation, I decided to make this an animated story. Doing the piece as an animation further opened up my options for what I could do visually, for one thing. Working in live action I would have been hard pressed to create a giant otherworldly monster in the span of a single semester with little to no budget. Furthermore, and more importantly, doing an animation would provide me a chance to exercise all aspects of my creative aspirations; I would create every element of the piece. I knew the piece would have to be very short, as my past experience has taught me that taking an animation from blank page to complete script, then through the process of illustration and animating, is a very time consuming process.

So with all these factors combined, I had a clear path: I would write, illustrate, animate, and even create the soundtrack for a short horror story. This would be a story entirely of and from me. What follows is an exploration of my thoughts on storytelling, dreams, horror, and the process of creating my short film.

### On Storytelling

To me, stories are a deeply important part of the human cultural experience. They help us build frameworks of perception through which to understand our relationships with other people, with the world, and with life itself. I have always been a storyteller at heart, and I have a great appreciation for the wide variety of media and techniques we use for conveying narrative, as well as the huge impact our stories can have on the worldwide culture. In this section I will explore some of the particular storytellers and stories which have had the biggest impact on my creative sensibilities.

One of the beliefs I hold most strongly about narrative is that storytelling does not necessarily require words. Some of my favorite films rely heavily on what we see as opposed to what characters say. David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), for example, leaves a large amount of its actual plot up to viewer interpretation based on visuals and disjointed, surreal dialogue. In fact, there isn't any dialogue at all for the first ten minutes of the film, nor for the last half an hour or so. Viewers are able to absorb a great deal of information and emotion simply through visuals and non-dialogue sound. Film as a medium is able to harness the convergence of audio and video in a very unique way. Besides Lynch, some filmmakers who display a strong grasp of the underlying visual nature of film, and who have influenced me deeply, include Buster Keaton, George Miller, Edgar Wright, Satoshi Kon, Nobuhiko Obayashi, and Jean-Pierre Jeunet.

Buster Keaton was a silent-era master when it came to the "motion" part of motion pictures. In his films, the human form – particularly his own – becomes a dynamic, ever-moving prop.<sup>1</sup> In his film *The General* (1926), he spends almost all of his time moving. The plot of the film itself revolves around riding a train back and forth across America, so here form and content become married. Keaton invokes the motion of the human body and its environment for humorous purposes, such as when he sits on the

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough examination of Keaton's filmmaking philosophy, see the video essay "Buster Keaton – The Art of the Gag" by Every Frame a Painting. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWEjxkkB8Xs>

connecting rod between two wheels of a steam engine and the train begins to roll away, swinging him up and down as the wheels turn. Keaton conveys his plot through action and visuals rather than weighty dialogue.

Similarly, George Miller's *Mad Max* films, and particularly the 2015 entry *Mad Max: Fury Road*, are a veritable circus of kinetics with minimal talk. Where many filmmakers are focusing on light, shadow, shape and color in their compositions, Miller pushes the boundaries of what can be done with movement (though don't get me wrong, he makes strong use of those other elements too). His work feels in some ways like a throwback to the visual styles of the silent era. In this respect I think of him as a contemporary Buster Keaton, keenly aware of the motion of his images and of the human form. Stunt men leap from vehicle to vehicle, tossing explosive spears and spraying bullets into the air. The characters in *Fury Road* talk as little as possible, only speaking where necessary to forward the story. In fact the titular action hero Max Rockatansky speaks almost entirely in grunts and monosyllables. His longest unbroken sentence is in the ballpark of five words. Both Keaton and Miller have instilled in me a great appreciation for the art of how the image on the screen moves, and the value of using visuals over dialogue for the forwarding of narrative.

Edgar Wright, meanwhile, utilizes cinematography and editing to great effect. The primary lesson I learned from his work is that every moment, every scene, is an opportunity. For Wright, this is usually an opportunity for comedy. He saturates the runtime of his films with so many gags, bits of foreshadowing, and symbolism that even after two or three viewings the audience is still discovering more nuances. He also makes strong use of the film frame – what we can and cannot see at any given moment.<sup>2</sup> Objects and people surprise us by entering or exiting our view in a variety of ways, like when the titular hero of *Scott Pilgrim Vs. the World* (2010) leaps out a window in the background as two

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<sup>2</sup> The video essay "Edgar Wright – How to Do Visual Comedy" by Every Frame a Painting further explores Edgar Wright's techniques. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FOzD4Sfgag>



people in the foreground of the shot hold an incongruous conversation. Wright taught me the value of making every moment meaningful, and of utilizing the space of the film frame in composition.

Another favorite filmmaker of mine, Satoshi Kon, works with space and time as the two relate to the camera's eye.<sup>3</sup> He works in animation, so it is easier for him to break the laws of reality in certain ways with his storytelling, particularly in the visual realm. He plays around with transitions from place to place and between points in time, sometimes by having disparate scenes dovetail into one another seamlessly, and at other times by having two scenes butt up against each other in a jarring manner. He often shows us the narrative from the highly subjective perspectives of his protagonists, who may or may not be perceiving the story reliably, for reasons which differ from film to film. So while his film *Perfect Blue* (1997) splices points of space and time as a reflection of its protagonist's crumbling mental state, his later film *Paprika* (2006) plays with space and time similarly, but as a reflection of what it's like to be inside a dream. It's worth noting, too, that he always finds very visually dynamic and unique ways to perform these transitions. So they work on both a symbolic level and the level of simple visual spectacle. Kon's techniques impressed upon me the psychological power and symbolism of leveraging spatial and temporal transitions in surprising and interesting ways through film.

Nobuhiko Ôbayashi's film *House* (1977) experiments not just with space and time, but with the very construction of narrative. He experiments with editing and a style of visual effects more interested in being engaging and artistic than in being convincingly realistic. When a girl is eaten alive by a demonic piano, for example, it is rendered in such an odd visual manner that one would never call it anything close to realistic – but because the visual effect is so unique and artistically crafted, the viewer engages with it, without necessarily stopping to think “oh that's not very realistic now is it?” Much of the film's story plays out in a disjointed and jumbled manner, letting the viewer interpret the meaning of the film.

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<sup>3</sup> The video essay “Satoshi Kon – Editing Space & Time” by Every Frame a Painting discusses Kon's creative surrealism in more depth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oz49vQwSoTE>

The form of the narrative compliments the surrealistic nature of the visual effects, and vice versa, so as to create a film so immersed in its own sense of reality that it pulls the viewer along for the ride.

Obayashi taught me to have full confidence in the style of my storytelling, no matter how odd that style may be. If the storyteller wades wholeheartedly into the world of the surreal and absurd, without hesitation, the audience will either follow or they won't. But the audience worth having is the audience which follows.

Jean-Pierre Jeunet, similarly to Kon and Obayashi, likes to play with the nature of reality. Jeunet dives into odd interpretations of the world, as seen through the eyes of his protagonists. He utilizes a very subjective, stylistic method of filmmaking. The worlds of his films are strange, off-kilter, wholly their own. Not quite our real world, but close enough in many ways that they remain recognizable. Each of these films is inextricably shaped by the perceptions of their protagonists. For instance, in the film *Amélie* (2001), we see the daily goings on of a small neighborhood in Paris, getting glimpses here and there into each of the eccentric characters' lives. I use the term eccentric here as an understatement. Perhaps bizarre and zany are more appropriate. But the thing is, throughout the film, pretty much everything we see is filtered by the perspective of the protagonist, Amélie. This is a world half real, half imagined. Even in scenes where Amélie is not present, the viewer must decide for themselves whether this is really what's happening, or whether it is a hypothetical event constructed by Amélie's opinions and fantasies. In his filmmaking, Jeunet gently reminds us that we can never be 100% objective in life. Reality is more like a web constructed from the perceptions of all people. Certain areas may overlap between people, and others may be more distinct to the individual. In Jeunet's films, this lack of objective reality is not a problem. It's more the opposite; a blessing. To Jeunet, subjectivity is what gives life its spirit of adventure and fun. He taught me the artistic possibilities in embracing narrative subjectivity.

David Lynch also works with a fuzzy, subjective view of reality. Like Jeunet, Lynch anchors his narratives in the perspective of their protagonists. But, whereas Jeunet makes sure his narratives are

accessible, Lynch typically forgoes accessibility and literal coherence in favor of capturing the emotional spirit of the protagonist's situation through highly surreal imagery and sound. For instance his film *Inland Empire* (2006), admittedly a chore to watch through even for a Lynch fan, is a three hour long trip through the fractured psyche of a woman who may or may not be reincarnated, or trapped in purgatory, and who may or may not be involved in an extramarital affair. Note the amount of "may or may not" statements in that description of the plot. Lynch leaves almost all of the actual concrete plot up to the viewer's interpretation, refusing to explain anything beyond the emotions of these characters who float freely through surrealistic, unhinged narrative space. At his most surreal, Lynch brings his characters to a point of existing with next to zero context. With no reference point for reality, the viewer's only anchors for connecting with the piece are the characters' pure emotional states, and the aesthetic compositions of the visuals and sound. While I don't tend to go as far as Lynch in my surrealistic sensibilities, he has taught me the interesting reactions one can elicit through experimenting with abstraction and surrealism, taking film as the truly audiovisual art form that it is.

### **On Dreams and Horror**

I have experienced sleep paralysis, sleep walking, and night terrors throughout my life. I take medication to prevent episodes, but I still occasionally have an experience, and when I was a young child I had them fairly often. An episode typically begins with me "waking up" in the middle of the night. My eyes are open, I can usually get up and move around, but I'm in a half-awake state, between reality and dream. My bedroom transforms, shadows becoming physical forms in front of my eyes. Often in my childhood night terrors there would be a monster. Over the years I saw many of these; a skeletal witch hanging from the ceiling, a pile of oozing skulls in my closet, a gang of masked men dragging me from



my bed, to name just a few. Other times, there would be only the fear, without a concrete source; just an overwhelming certainty that my death was imminent.

Today I only have these night terrors very rarely, and when I do have them the fear is typically no longer there. Over time the fear has been replaced by fascination. I find it, in an odd sort of way, to be a blessing that I get to actually see, in "real life," the kinds of images and creatures that are, for most people, relegated to the world of horror films. It is one thing to watch a Japanese ghost movie like *Ju-On: The Grudge* (Shimizu, 2002). It's quite another thing to wake up in the middle of the night and actually see that ghost melt out of your bedroom wall. Yes that is pretty terrifying in the moment, but as a horror film lover, it makes me very happy that I get to experience it.

Understandably, these night terrors have had a big impact on me. As I said, I love the horror genre. I can only assume that I was drawn to the genre at least in part because of the terrors. Just as my childhood response to the experiences was fear and my adult response is fascination, so too has my relationship with horror narrative evolved. As a kid I had a morbid fascination with horror films, but was always deathly afraid to watch them. So I orbited the genre at a distance. I'd read the backs of the film boxes at video rental stores, I'd pore over plot synopses online. I never watched the movies though. I saw one or two here or there, and was lightly traumatized by each. I had insomnia for a few nights after I watched *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980) at the behest of my friends, and the night I watched *The Grudge 2* (Shimizu, 2006) I got next to no sleep because of constant interruption by night terrors wherein I saw the film's ghost lurking in the closet. Over time the horror genre eventually faded from my consciousness, only to return in college. I started seeking the genre out. It was at that point that I really fell in love.

To me, the world of horror and the world of dreams are very closely linked. Each explores the deeper, primordial subconscious of mankind. Horror films, at their best, are examinations of the cultural

struggles of their eras. Meanwhile, our dreams work a similar course through the personal struggles of our waking lives. As Horror shows us the ugly side of life that we typically cover up, so too do dreams expose to us the landscape of our fears and desires, without the whitewashing and the lies we so often tell ourselves *about* ourselves.

There are many varieties of horror, but each taps into the subconscious in its own way. I personally narrow the genre down to two overarching subgenres – The first includes things like slasher and monster films, where there is a literal physical force threatening injury or death. For easy reference I call this Physical Horror. The second is the realm of supernatural and psychological horror, those films which deal with the less literal threat of destroying one's sanity. I call this category Metaphysical Horror.

Physical Horror films tend to cater toward our lust – literal sexual lust, in the form of sex scenes, and figurative blood lust in the form of, well, all that blood and violence. This type of horror is predicated on our survival instincts rather than our rationality. The monster is scary to us because it has fangs, claws, and can eat us whole. Adrenaline is typically invoked here more than dread. So this category covers the likes of slasher movies, monster movies, or so-called "gore porn."

Metaphysical Horror, which is my primary area of interest, is more psychological. It reflects the clash between rationality and irrationality. People content in their conceptions of a rational reality are suddenly confronted with a situation which indicates an irrational reality. The horror comes from the idea that, despite all the meaning we as humans attribute to life, maybe none of it matters at all; maybe everything we live for is meaningless.

One of my favorite horror films, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Pulse* (2001), deals with that topic rather directly. The premise is that ghosts begin to enter our world through holes in reality created by the proliferation of internet technology. The ghosts themselves don't act maliciously, but they are terrifying. They don't chase people down and kill them, or enact age-old curses. All they do is inform people about

the bleak, meaningless nature of the eternal afterlife. At that point, the humans simply commit suicide on their own accord. Their faith in an inherently meaningful life has been destroyed, so they have no reason to live anymore. The film is effective because it plays on the horror of shattering rationality, rather than presenting a literal killer monster.

This is the strength of H.P. Lovecraft's classic literature, as well. His stories, which I categorize as Metaphysical Horror, typically revolve around protagonists who face a cold and uncaring universe where humanity's rationality holds no meaning. Interestingly, Lovecraft sometimes blends elements of the Physical and the Metaphysical. He confronts the reader with twisted creatures from other dimensions, beings and forces which are as likely to physically maim or mutate us as they are to obliterate our sanity. In one particular short story, "The Curse of Yig," (Lovecraft, 2013, pp. 88-102) Lovecraft details the progression of a woman's paranoia over a mythical Native American curse. Her belief in the curse becomes so fervent that she murders her husband with an axe, for fear that he has become a snake-like monster. He has not. However the curse is real, as is discovered when she herself turns into the monster. This story blends the fear of a supernatural unknown and loss of sanity with the gut physical horror of a woman hacking her own husband to bits. Lovecraft instills fear by telling us that man's consciousness is not the center of the universe. It is not even a blip in the grand scheme of things. There is no reason to hope because hope is meaningless. And, as demonstrated by "The Curse of Yig," in Lovecraft's world our attempts to combat the fearful unknown often end up causing us more trouble.

A similar sense of cosmic irrationality and futility can be found in the graphic novel works of Junji Ito. His graphic novel *Uzumaki* deals with these themes at great length – quite literally. The book is over 600 pages of cosmic irrationality, or rather, a sense of a certain rationality that we as humans cannot understand. The story follows the residents of a small town as they realize the town is somehow infected with an omnipresent spiral pattern. What starts with some residents simply noticing the recurrence of spiral patterns in their natural surroundings – plants grow in spiral shapes, light breezes



create small whirlwinds, and flowing creeks develop whirlpools -- escalates, as the recurring pattern takes a more sinister tone. Among other horrors, people begin to turn into snails, a man's pottery twists itself into spiral formations inside the kiln, and a woman's birthmark turns into a spiral-shaped hole which progressively bores through her whole head. There is the sense that these spirals are part of some deeper cosmic plan. But to the townsfolk plagued by these escalating horrors, the cosmic rationality might as well be irrational, for it operates on some plane wholly separate from our human understanding of the universe. For what reason would any rational being instill an unassuming location with such a destructive force which acts seemingly at random? That is not for the characters of this novel or for the reader to know, but rather they must gasp in horror at the glimpses of the nigh-omnipotent driving force behind these events.

In the real world, this cosmic clash between rationality and irrationality (or perhaps incomprehensible, cosmic rationality) is captured in our dreams -- while dreaming we often engage in off-kilter, surreal scenarios that feel like twisted versions of our daily experiences. These scenarios may sometimes be almost like real life, or feel very real in the moment, but there's always something slightly wrong. Nothing quite makes sense. A dream's warped reflection of reality is inherently off-putting, throwing us off balance. So to me, the world of dreams is inherently conducive to the genre of Metaphysical Horror. This can be seen in films like *Insidious* (Wan, 2010), which deals with a child trapped in a perpetual dream state by a demon, or *The Babadook* (Kent, 2014) where we enter a psychologically tormented mother's dream states as she experiences them. The subject of dreams is ripe material for horror storytelling.

For this piece I used Adobe Illustrator to create the graphics, my virtual puppets as I call them. Illustrator is vector-based, which means essentially that I can scale the graphics up and down to any size without worrying about distortion. The other advantage of vector-based graphics is that the editing style for them is non-destructive, which means nothing is set in stone. If I need to go back and adjust elements of the image, I have a lot of freedom to do so.

This allows me to synergize my work between the graphics creation and the actual animation. If I'm animating the piece and I realize something in my graphics needs to be adjusted to work better on-screen, I can quickly go back to Illustrator and make that change. Since I need my graphics to be articulated, so that for example the young boy can bend his elbows and knees, I have to make each of my characters in many separate layers (see Figure 1). This means that each piece of the character is treated as a separate object, which is important for the actual animation process.

Aesthetically, during the illustration process I drew conscious influence from a number of sources. One of the primary choices was that I wanted to mimic the look of a shadow puppet play; flat black puppets against a paper or cloth background. I always liked shadow puppets, and thought it would be an interesting and relatively unique choice. The next big choice was that I wanted my graphics to look a little bit like old woodcut art, with uneven lines and odd little shapes floating in the blank space. This is another visual style with long-enduring draw for me, and one that I feel lends itself well to a horror tone.



Figure 1: The Illustrator composition for my main monster has 26 separate pieces, because each of these pieces must be able to move independently in the animation.



As far as film and literature influences go, I had Hayao Miyazaki's iconic ghost character "No Face" (Figure 2) from the film *Spirited Away* (2001) in mind while designing my main monster, The Witch. I was also inspired in overall style by the art style of the aforementioned graphic novel works of Junji Ito (Figure 3).



Figure 2: No Face as he appears in "Spirited Away"



Figure 3: A panel from Ito 'sJzumaki, exemplifying his style.

I would also say that, in general, I have been influenced by the German Expressionism film movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly films like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) and *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922). These films craft a unique ambiance of horror with their highly unnatural, stylized sets and lighting. They throw the viewer off balance with strong angles and chiaroscuro, making them more vulnerable, psychologically, to the horror of the narrative. So I chose to go that direction with the angles and shapes in my designs, and to make heavy use of chiaroscuro, so as to create that unsettling, unsafe ambience.

For the design of The Witch, I wanted to bring together biological and mechanical elements, in order to emphasize her status as an otherworldly entity which operates outside of our understanding. We don't know what she is, or *why* she is, or whether she even exists outside the dreams of this young boy. I wanted her to look composed enough that she could theoretically exist, physically, but unrealistic enough that she couldn't necessarily operate within our understanding of

reality. So for example, I played with space by making her somehow able to swallow the boy despite her head not being big enough to do so, and having her throat open up into an extended, surrealistic rabbit hole despite the fact that from the outside her body appears to be a skeletal framework with nowhere for the boy to go were he to be swallowed. When we see something in a dream, it typically is skewed and doesn't quite work on a logical plane and I wanted to reflect that. The combination of biological and mechanical is also intended to play on the idea that the biological is real, and the mechanical is something constructed, furthering the theme of blurring the lines between rationality and irrationality, blurring the world of reality with the world of the dream.

For the animation, I use Adobe After Effects. In After Effects I create a "stage" in virtual 3D space, into which I import my Illustrator graphics. Each layer of the Illustrator file is treated as a separate object, and I must then rig those objects together to create a puppet that moves cohesively. After Effects allows me to set up a system of "parent/child" relationships between layers. For example, if I have two objects, we'll call them A and B, I might set A to be the parent of B. That means that whenever I move A, B follows so that it retains its relative position to A. In practical application, this is used when, for example, I set the torso of a puppet to be the parent of the puppet's upper arm. Then I set the puppet's upper arm to be the parent of their forearm. Thus when I move the torso, the upper arm follows the torso, and the forearm follows the upper arm. In this manner, using a chain of parent/child relationships linking together each separate piece of the graphic, I have created a puppet which will move all together in one piece as though it were a physical body.

All motion in After Effects is governed by key frames. A key frame is a point in time where I have told the program "at this mark, X object should be in Y position," or "X object should be rotated Y degrees clockwise/counterclockwise" (see Figure 2). The process of keyframing is as much a technical skill as it is an art. The timing of the key frames is very important for the flow of motion in the animation. Since motion is very important to me, I try to put a lot of detail in to make the movements



look good. Figure 4 shows a timeline with key frames. So in that example, I have eleven key frames over the course of seven seconds. That's just for one object. In the particular instance shown by that figure, there are eleven more objects moving at the same time, each with their own assortment of key frames. It's about 120 key frames over seven seconds. But the more complex a specific set of motions, the more key frames I have to set, and the less complex the fewer, so the number of key frames per second can vary wildly.

The motion of The Boy was crafted to contrast with the motion of the monsters, so as to set him

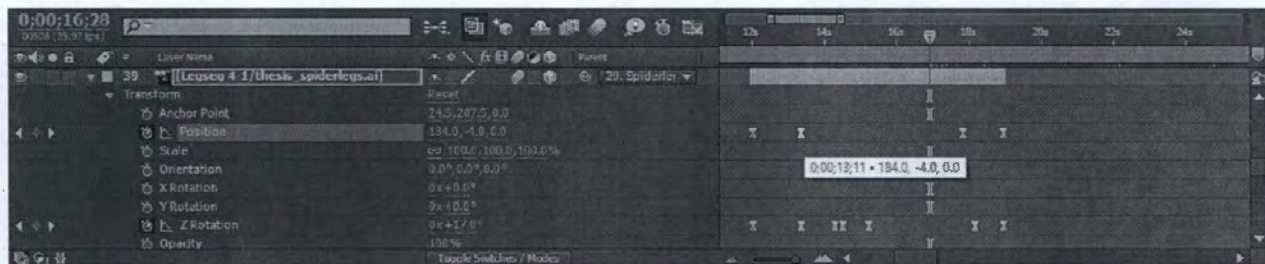


Figure 4: Each of the small hourglass-shaped marks is a key frame. To the left side are listed various attributes of the object that can be animated through keyframing.

apart and to emphasize the monsters' otherworldly presences. I aimed to make him move much more naturally. Meanwhile The Witch had to move oddly. Her spider legs help this right off the bat, as she crawls in. Then the key moment for her motion was the short sequence where she jerks towards the boy while he hides beneath his blanket. I wanted this to be the sequence that would really set her presence firmly into that uncanny bio-mechanical realm.

For the soundtrack I use FL Studio. This program allows me to set up a collection of synthesized instruments and create patterns which I piece together on a timeline to create a song. Overall it feels not unlike the workflow of After Effects, placing points on a timeline which command certain elements to perform certain actions. In creating the music I had to bounce back and forth between the music and the animation, to make sure I mesh the timing of the two together appropriately. So, whereas the

graphics and story were all done as pre-production for the animation, I consider the musical composition to be almost a part of the animation process itself.

My musical influences for this specific project include John Carpenter's horror film soundtracks, Mica Levi's soundtrack for the film *Under the Skin* (Glazer, 2013), and Joseph Bishara's soundtrack for *Insidious* (Wan, 2010). I wanted something that might feel a little classic in some ways, but with a synthesized, electronic tone to it. So in choosing which synthesizers I would use, I picked a mix of harder hitting electronic sounds and some more orchestral tones. This reflects my decision to marry biological and mechanical elements visually in the design of *The Witch*. I thought it was important for the form and function of the sound to mesh with the form and function of the visuals on that thematic level.

### **Closing Thoughts**

I could probably write a book about my thoughts on the topics discussed in this piece, if I let myself. But for sake of brevity I have constricted my discussion to this length. Suffice it to say, the relationship between dreams and horror narrative is a very big theme in my creative sensibility. In creating the animation I have stretched and exercised both my creative and technical skills in digital storytelling. Meanwhile in writing the statement I have reflected on some of the deeper driving motivations and philosophies behind my artistry. I hope I have captured in my animation and in this statement some sense of the potential of exploring the subjective worlds of our dreams through the lens of surrealistic psychological horror.

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## A Sleep

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A young BOY sleeps soundly in his oversized bed.

The night is still.

Until... Something begins to move beneath the bed. Spider legs creep out and up, scratching at the bedframe.

The bed begins to shake. The Boy is awoken. He sits up with a start. The legs withdraw. He rubs his eyes.

He crawls to the foot of the bed and peeks over the edge.

Nothing there.

Across the room, the door slams open. Light coming through the doorway casts a looming shadow of the figure standing there.

It is a ghostly figure. The WITCH. Her body is shrouded in a tattered cloak.

The Boy falls back on his butt, petrified with fear.

The Witch's shadow moves ever so slowly across the wall, toward the boy. Her hands slide out from the cloak, reaching for him with spindly, jittering claws.

The Boy crawls backwards towards the head of the bed, where he leaps under the covers, shaking.

The Witch herself follows the shadow. We can now see her face. A mask of blank inexpression framed in the cloak's hood. She jerks and shutters as she moves.

She arrives at the foot of the bed.

The Boy peeks out from the blanket. The Witch's hand snaps forward.

She's got him by the ankle. She drags him toward her bit by bit as he struggles in vain to stay on the bed.

His body smacks onto the floor. The Witch hunches over him like a wolf getting ready to eat. The cloak slides down her body, revealing a long thick neck connecting the head to a mechanical body.

She opens her jaw wide. It unhinges, like a snake's jaw.

The Boy kicks at her face and body, to no avail.  
Spider legs jut from the floor and hold him down.

BOY'S POV

The Witch snaps the Boy up in her mouth.

INT. WITCH'S THROAT - CONTINUOUS

Her throat has expanded -- he's not being swallowed, so much as falling down the rabbit hole.

He falls and falls. Ghostly faces and grasping hands fade in and out of view.

He falls until he reaches the tunnel's end...

END POV

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

... where he pops out of thin air above his bed, and smacks into the mattress.

All is calm in the room. The Boy is shaken though, wide awake.

He looks around the room. The door is cracked open just a bit. The only light in the room is coming through this crack.

The Boy cautiously gets out of bed.

As he walks toward the door, back in his bed something stirs. A skeletal STALKER rises from the mattress and begins to crawl toward him on all fours. Its head bobs as though it's laughing at some silent joke.

The boy is at the door. The Stalker rears up on its hind legs.

The boy shuts the door.

CUT TO BLACK.

